

Chatterbox #188 – Leadership

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Morag tackle a difficult but interesting topic: leadership. What makes a good leader? How can you describe a good leader using idiomatic English? Join us in this Chatterbox episode to learn some of the answers to these questions!

Fun fact

When talking about leadership, you're likely to hear someone say, "Good leaders are made, not born." While this sounds like an expression, it's actually a quote from Vince Lombardi, a famous American football coach from the mid-20th century. What do you think? Is good leadership a quality that people are born with, or one that must be learned?

Expressions included in the learning materials

- A trend
- To crack the whip
- Way back
- Herd mentality
- It factor



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: Hey, everybody. I'm Andrew.

Morag: And I'm Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

Morag, how's it goin'?

Morag: Not bad. How you doin', Andrew?

Andrew: I'm doing great. You know, I made an interesting discovery this week.

Morag: Oh yeah?

Andrew: Audiobooks.

Morag: Oh, you just discovered audiobooks?

Andrew: I just discovered audiobooks. I know I'm behind the **trend** but—

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: Oh my God, I'm lovin' them.

Morag: It's awesome. I have a friend that turned me on to getting *The Economist*, the magazine, on audio.

Andrew: Oh yeah?

Morag: It's actually really interesting and soothing.

Andrew: Ha, I'll have to check that out.

Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: I am just loving the fact that I can enjoy a book and do something else at the same time.

Morag: Ha ha!

Andrew: I can multitask.

- Morag: You might have a productivity problem, Andrew.
- Andrew: Yeah, I might have a productivity problem. But, yeah, so this is my big discovery this week, audiobooks, and I think it reminds me of maybe **way back**. It's like an ancient human tradition to tell each other stories and to listen to stories. So I think I'm connecting with human history in a way.
- Morag: From what I know, I think that's right. I think you also can often retain more information if you're listening to somebody talk.
- Andrew: Yeah, it's true.
- Morag: Yeah, great.
- Andrew: This is great. I'm gonna keep listening to audiobooks. I suggest our listeners check some out too. This could be a really cool way to study English. But don't convert to audiobooks fully.
- Morag: No.
- Andrew: Find some time for Culips, too, please.
- Morag: I would love to have some recommendations of great audiobooks that you've found, though, because ... And the voice is important too.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: If you find anything awesome, you should share it with me and the rest of the Culips listeners.
- Andrew: You know, something that's interesting that maybe people don't know is that Suzanne, our other Culips host, is an audiobook reader.
- Morag: Oh!
- Andrew: And she narrates many, many audiobooks. So you know what? I should do an episode with her where we talk about that and get her to recommend some of the books she's read. Because I haven't listened to any, but I should now that I'm into audiobooks, yeah.
- Morag: That's sounds great. I would love to hear that episode.
- Andrew: Well, Morag, let's get started with our episode for today.
- Morag: Mmhmm.

Andrew: And we're doing a Chatterbox episode. And Chatterbox episodes are where we have a completely natural conversation. It's unscripted, guys. What you're hearing right now is how we talk in our everyday lives.

And we have an intriguing topic today, intriguing. It is leadership, OK? We're going to talk today about leadership. And this is kind of a more advanced topic, I think, but I'm looking forward to an interesting conversation, Morag.

So I think what we should do here is break this episode down into sections, OK? So maybe in the first section, we can talk just in general about what leadership is. And then in the second section, we can talk about our personal experiences as leaders. And in the third section, we can talk about some leaders that we respect or admire.

Morag: Think that sounds like a great plan, Andrew.

Andrew: Thank you very much. I thought of it myself.

Morag: You took a leading role in ... In this episode. There we go, very good. Yeah, yeah.

Andrew: Wow.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: We're off to a good start here. OK, so let's start with some definitions. Morag, in your opinion, what is a leader?

Morag: A leader is someone who organizes, inspires, propels other people.

Andrew: Yeah, I totally agree with that. A leader is somebody who watches over other people, right? They're at the top of an organization or the top of a company, and it's their job to make sure other people perform their best. So they have to motivate them and inspire them.

Morag: Yeah. You can also think about it in terms of personalities, too. Some people are naturally leaders, so even if they don't have a title that goes along with that, then they're the people who make plans for others and decide what everyone's going to do.

And you know the people who are like, "OK guys, it's 8:30! We've got to get up now and get on that bus and get down to the place by this sorta time," and just like organization, you know?

Andrew: Mmhmm, yeah. Even groups of friends will sometimes have a leader, right?

Morag: Mmhmm.

- Andrew: Yeah, and the person that kind of gently **cracks the whip** and gets everybody movin'.
- Morag: Absolutely. The one who propels or pushes or moves other people.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Because you do need usually just one or two people in a group to move everyone else.
- Andrew: Totally.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Now from the learner's perspective, from an English learner's perspective, I think they would be very interested in knowing some adjectives that collocate, or some adjectives that go along naturally, with this word, leader. So what are some words that we can use to describe a leader?
- Morag: Hmm, one of the sort of things that we say is natural born, or just natural.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah, a natural leader or a natural-born leader.
- Morag: Mmhmm. So someone who's just good at that without training. You also talk about leaders in terms of strength, so you can have a strong leader or a weak leader, poor leader, you know?
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah, we can also have a visionary leader, right?
- Morag: Hmm!
- Andrew: Somebody with a clear vision for the future with a clear plan and agenda.
- Morag: That's a very, very good type of visionary leader.
- Andrew: Yeah. And another word I can think of is charismatic, a charismatic leader.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And maybe in a religious context you could find a charismatic leader, especially in the context of cults, I think.
- Morag: Oh yeah, you're right!
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: Hmm.

- Andrew: Interesting.
- Morag: Interesting, yeah!
- Andrew: OK, so we talked about a leader, now what about this concept of leadership? How is this different from a leader?
- Morag: Well, leadership is the position or the ability to lead. So it's either the job or the capacity to be a leader.
- Andrew: Yeah, OK. So if we once again talk about some adjectives we can use to describe leadership, what adjectives could somebody use?
- Morag: Hmm, I think effective and ineffective leadership are probably some of the most useful ones.
- Andrew: Yeah, definitely. Effective, ineffective ... Like you mentioned before, we talk about it in terms of strong leadership and weak leadership too, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: And maybe clear leadership, clear leadership. However, I wouldn't say unclear leadership.
- Morag: No.
- Andrew: That sounds strange. But definitely clear leadership.
- Morag: Murky leadership. No, that's—
- Andrew: Not really, right?
- Morag: That ... No, doesn't work. Yeah.
- Andrew: OK. So another interesting linguistic aspect that we can talk about is the opposite of a leader.
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: What do we call somebody who's the opposite of a leader, Morag? It's an interesting expression.
- Morag: Yeah. Well, there's a couple ways that you can ... You can just say a follower.
- Andrew: Mmhmm?
- Morag: Or you can also say a sheep.

- Andrew: Yeah. We can call somebody a sheep. And we call them a sheep because they are easily led, right?
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: They can't really think for themselves, they just follow the leader.
- Morag: Well, you become part of a group that thinks semi-collectively. There's actually a ... I'm sure everyone has had this experience. Have you ever been standing at a crosswalk and not paying attention?
- Andrew: Mmhmm?
- Morag: And then one person starts to walk, and everybody does, even though it's not actually the time yet.
- Andrew: Right. This is **herd mentality**.
- Morag: Exactly. You just sort of ... You do something because you're taking your cues from the leader, who's the person who did the action first.
- Andrew: Right. Oh, I like this example. This is a very clear example to imagine.
- Morag: Mmhmm. Yeah, sometimes you ... You don't know that you're being led, you know?
- Andrew: Hmm, totally.
- Morag: So that's really ... That's really being a follower in that instance, or a sheep. A part of the herd.
- Andrew: Totally, yeah. OK, so before we talk about our personal experiences with leadership, let's brainstorm some qualities that good leaders need to possess. Ha, I think that a good leader definitely needs to be very well organized.
- Morag: I would ... Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I would agree. But I think that being dynamic, charismatic, kind of attractive ... Not in a ... Not in a physical beauty way but in a kind of ... In a personality way. Like somebody that you like and want to be around. Or that at least you respect.
- Andrew: Yeah, at least that you respect in some capacity.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: I think it's gotta be somebody that you look up to in some regard.

- Morag: Mmhmm. I guess, yeah, if you like them or they're charismatic, that's one way of looking up to them. Or you could also fear them.
- Andrew: Yeah, definitely.
- Morag: Or simply respect their abilities.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: You know, if they're better at something than you are. So I guess there's a lot of different types.
- Andrew: Totally. And I completely agree with you there. I was listening to a podcast the other day, a political podcast talking about the rise of Donald Trump.
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: Now whether you love him or hate him, I know people are very polarized about this president. But one thing that this podcast was saying is that he became president because he had this sort of weird charisma, in a way. I feel strange saying that he's charismatic because I don't think he's the classical definition of charismatic. But in a way, he's got that quality that I think many of his supporters see in him.
- Morag: For one reason or another, you can't look away.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, exactly.
- Morag: Mmhmm.
- Andrew: He's got that **it factor**, we call it, right? The **it factor**, something that sets him apart from other people.
- Morag: Yup.
- Andrew: OK, that's enough Trump. I'm done talkin' about him. Let's move on to our personal experiences, OK?
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: So I'm curious, Morag, have you ever been a leader? Maybe in a school activity or a sports team, or a club, something like this?
- Morag: Well, when I was a kid, I was very bossy.
- Andrew: Very bossy, oh.
- Morag: So I think on a micro level, yes.

- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: I was always the leader or the director of group projects and things like that in school.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: But the main experience that I had was taking a job when I was in university and doing my first degree, where I was a supervisor. So I went from working at this coffee shop movie theatre to supervising people. So my job changed from, you know, helping customers to watching people help customers and make sure that they were doing things correctly and on time. And starting, you know, being responsible for starting the movie up and dealing with customer complaints and stuff.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: So I was really the one running the show.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: And that was actually really hard to ... To turn around and say to somebody who had been your equal yesterday—
- Andrew: Hmm, right.
- Morag: That you're like, "Well, you know, it's gettin' a little late." Like, "I need you to clean this again. You did a bad job."
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: "You need to redo that, it's unacceptable." You know, that's really hard! And it's hard to have ... To make people take you seriously.
- Andrew: Mmhmm, especially when you were their equal before.
- Morag: Exactly.
- Andrew: I think this would be really challenging, yeah.
- Morag: Mmhmm. So that's one of the challenges I definitely faced, was trying to really embody and take on that new position when people had known me as just ... As an equal before.
- Andrew: Do you miss being a leader, that role as a leader?

- Morag: Yes, I do because it does come with perks. It's the thing that people sort of look up at their bosses and they're like, "Well why ... Why aren't they workin' so hard?" Right? That kind of thing, is you end up having more responsibility. And when things go wrong, you're the one to blame.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: However, there's often a little bit more room to do stuff like go sit in the office and put your feet up.
- Andrew: Hey, that is a good perk.
- Morag: Right? I loved it, yeah.
- Andrew: In my experience, I would say that my personality, it's not well suited for a leadership position.
- Morag: Hmm.
- Andrew: But there are some times where I have taken the role of leader, especially when I'm put in a situation where I think I'm the most talented or the most capable of doing a good job.
- Morag: The most qualified, yeah?
- Andrew: The most qualified. I gravitate towards the leader position. I kinda put myself in the position to be the leader. But I have a hard time delegating, telling people what to do.
- Morag: Oh man, that's my favourite.
- Andrew: And I think sometimes I'm just not strong enough with people, especially, as our listeners know and as you know, one of my hobbies is playing music. So I've been in a band for a good chunk of my life. And in a band situation, if you're the songwriter, you gotta try and tell the other members how to play your song, right? You have a vision for your song and it needs to come together, and so you kind of have to be the bandleader. And this can be very difficult to try and convince other people to play the way you want them to when they wanna play the way they want to.
- Morag: Trying to lead people in a creative situation where everybody has ... Is attached to their ideas and is emotionally attached to how they want something to sound, I think is definitely an equally difficult process.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: Yeah, managing creative enterprises or—

Andrew: Oh, it can be messy, it can be messy, yeah.

Morag: 'Cause, yeah, everyone really cares.

Andrew: Totally.

Morag: Yeah.

Andrew: Which is a good thing, right?

Morag: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Andrew: It shows passion, so—

Morag: Yes!

Andrew: I don't want to complain about it too much, but it's an issue with trying to lead people creatively, absolutely.

Morag: Yeah, yeah. Well, I think ... I think that we're always going to have challenges with leadership roles. That's why they tend to be, you know ... In companies they're higher paid.

Andrew: Totally, totally.

Morag: Managing people is a very specific skill and it's not easy or for everyone.

Andrew: Morag, let's move on to our third part of this episode. Just let's talk for a minute about some leaders that we admire.

Morag: Hmm.

Andrew: And, yeah, what immediately jumps to mind is a political leader for me.

Morag: Mmhmm?

Andrew: What about you?

Morag: For me, what immediately jumped to mind was, "I don't like leaders. I like people on the outside."

Andrew: Oh, you rebel.

Morag: A lot of my sort of heroes, and that kind of thing, when I was younger they were all sort of artists or poets or things, so you know.

Andrew: Mmhmm, OK, OK.

- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: More cultural leaders, you could say.
- Morag: Yeah, more cultural leaders. And then they usually are, you know, lone wolves.
- Andrew: OK.
- Morag: Yeah.
- Andrew: Interesting. The person that jumped to my mind right away was Barack Obama because ... Yeah, maybe it's just due to our political climate that we're all goin' through right now. And I know there's a lot of fair criticisms you can make about President Obama, but just on the face of things, the way that he personally lived his life as a family man and as just a really well-spoken and hardworking person, I think he just set a good example.
- And even though I'm not American, I looked at him and his family and I thought, "Ah, it's really nice, you know?" He's doing a good job and it was nice to see him living his life like that.
- Morag: Yeah. Yeah, I would agree with you, as well. And, actually, when you were talking, I just ... I did think of one thing.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Morag: We've got a pretty cool pope right now.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Morag: Now I'm not Catholic. I'm not Catholic and I'm not actually religious, but he's neat!
- Andrew: He is definitely different.
- Morag: Yes! He seems to be a real man of the people. What he's doing is leading this ancient institution that has very, very set rules and leading it into a bit of a more modern direction, which is pretty amazing.
- Andrew: Totally.
- Morag: All right, Andrew. That brings us to the end of today's episode. Thanks for spending your time listening to us, everybody. Our website is Culips.com. If you want to learn more about how you can study with us and improve your English, visit Culips.com.

Andrew: Yeah! Culips.com is the place where you can become a Culips member and get access to our learning materials, which we design specifically to help you get better at speaking and listening to English.

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We will talk to you next time. Bye.

Morag: Goodbye.

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Detailed Explanations

A trend

A trend is a noun that has two related meanings.

The first is the general way in which a situation changes. It is commonly used to talk about economic changes or developments in people's behaviour. For example, you might hear someone complaining that there's **a trend** of restaurants raising their prices. In other words, the person is complaining that restaurants are generally becoming more expensive.

The second, more specific meaning of **a trend** is a popular new style in fashion. For example, right now in 2017 in North America, there's **a trend** of young women wearing heavy makeup. In other words, lots of makeup is the popular new look for young women.

Can you think of any new fashion styles where you live? You can call those **trends**!

Here are a couple more examples with **a trend**:

Sheila:	Hey, Nick, do you want to have Mexican food for dinner?
Nick:	Sure, where were you thinking?
Shelia:	The place down the street.
Nick:	Which one? Three new Mexican restaurants have opened in the neighbourhood in the last couple months.
Shelia:	Oh, I hadn't noticed. That seems like a lot!
Nick:	Yeah, it must be some food trend .

Danica:	Have you noticed the crazy new trend in women's jeans?
Mike:	No, what is it?
Danica:	It's so weird! All of a sudden, I see all these girls wearing jeans that have transparent plastic knees.
Mike:	That sounds like a really weird trend . Wouldn't they be really uncomfortable to wear?
Danica:	I'm sure they would be! People are crazy these days.

To crack the whip

To crack the whip is an idiom that means to use your power and authority to make someone work harder, usually by being harsh or strict with them.

Have you ever had a boss go from having a relaxed attitude to being more firm about following the rules? This would be an example of someone **cracking the whip**.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that the leader of a group of friends is someone who gently **cracks the whip**. In other words, they are the person who urges the others into action. By saying that they gently **crack the whip**, Andrew implies that this person is not mean to their friends, but still holds an authority in the group.

So, any time someone uses their authority to make people work harder, or simply get moving on an activity, you can say they're **cracking the whip**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to crack the whip**:

Luke:	Oh man, I'm exhausted.
Sara:	You poor thing! Why are you so tired?
Luke:	My boss was really cracking the whip today. He kept on checking on me to make sure I was doing my work fast enough.
Sara:	Was he doing that because you're usually lazy?
Luke:	No! Well ... Maybe.

Jacob:	I brought home pizza!
Jean:	Again?
Jacob:	What do you mean? I thought you loved pizza.
Jean:	I do, but I thought we agreed that we were going to try to eat healthier.
Jacob:	We did! I thought that meant in general, though, not all the time.
Jean:	You've eaten pizza three times this week! Do I have to start cracking the whip about your eating habits?
Jacob:	No, no. It's OK. I'll be better next week. So ... Do you want a piece of pizza?

Way back

Way back, sometimes written or said as **way back** when, is another way of saying a long time ago.

In this episode, Andrew says that audiobooks remind him of **way back** in a time where people told each other stories instead of writing things down. In other words, audiobooks remind him of a world that existed a very long time ago.

While you can use **way back** like Andrew did, to refer to a time in the distant past, there's no set time in the past that this phrase refers to. What is considered **way back** is context dependant. For example, if you've been friends with someone for 10 years, you could say that you know them from **way back**.

So, if you want to say that something happened a long time ago, or that it felt like a long time ago, you can say that it happened **way back**.

Here are a couple more examples with **way back**:

Hannah:	OK, so you're going to come play poker at my house on Thursday night, right?
Denis:	Absolutely! You still live at 2034 Cook Street, right?
Hannah:	No, I don't. That's an address from way back .
Denis:	Wait, didn't I visit your place there last year? That's not way back at all!
Hannah:	Yeah, but I've moved a couple times since then. It feels like a long time ago to me!

Rachel:	What are you snacking on?
Tom:	Just some caramel corn.
Rachel:	Can I have some?
Tom:	Sure!
Rachel:	Wow, I haven't tasted that flavour in ages! It takes me way back to my childhood. My grandma used to keep caramel corn around all the time.

Herd mentality

Herd mentality, sometimes referred to as herd instinct or mob mentality, is a term that describes the tendency of people to behave the same way that other people are behaving, without thinking about why.

In this episode, Morag gave the example of people waiting at a crosswalk. If one person starts to walk across the street, it's common for the other people to start to follow them—even if it isn't yet safe to cross. So, this is an example of **herd mentality**, because people are following one person blindly, without assessing the situation for themselves.

Trends are another example of **herd mentality**, because many people follow new, fashionable trends without questioning them.

So, in any situation where people adopt a certain behaviour without questioning the reason, they are displaying **herd mentality**.

Here are a couple more examples with **herd mentality**:

Brock:	Do you want to come bowling with us later?
Ann:	Nah, I'm OK. I'm going to stay in tonight.
Brock:	Aw, come on! You don't like bowling?
Ann:	I like bowling fine, but everyone wants to do it all of a sudden. It's some weird herd mentality thing. I don't like that the bowling lanes are so packed!
Brock:	Well, you're missing out! Bowling is the hot new thing!
Ann:	That's exactly what I'm talking about. I don't like trends!

Kevin:	Have you noticed that everyone these days seems to be getting computer science degrees?
Kate:	Yeah, just another example of herd mentality .
Kevin:	I'm not so sure. I think it might just be the most relevant degree to get for today's job market.
Kate:	Maybe you're right, but if everyone gets one, then they're not going to be so useful anymore.

It factor

What does it mean if someone says that a person has the **it factor**? The **it factor**, sometimes written as **IT factor**, is a powerful but indescribable quality of charisma and charm. It is most common to talk about celebrities and politicians as having the **it factor**.

Have you ever wondered what makes famous people different from the rest of us? It's the **it factor**, the qualities they have that make them stand out from the crowd.

So, the **it factor** is different from the basic qualities that a famous person is known for. For example, being a good leader and a good politician is required for a successful career in politics. Similarly, having a good singing voice is required for being a famous singer. However, to be successful in both jobs, people need to also have the **it factor**: the magnetism and personality that attract people to them.

Here are a couple more examples with **it factor**:

Julia: What do you think of this new music? I really like the singer.

Simon: Oh, I know her. I don't think her voice is that good.

Julia: Yeah? Well, how did she get so popular then?

Simon: I think she has a lot of **it factor**, and that's it!

Becky: What do you think of the two people we just interviewed for the job?

Ian: I don't know. One of them seemed better qualified, but I didn't really like him. The other one doesn't have nearly as much experience, but I thought she seemed like a great person.

Becky: I know what you mean. I really liked the girl with less experience, too. I wonder why?

Ian: She has the **it factor**, you know?

Becky: You're right! Is the **it factor** enough to make her the best candidate for the job, though?

Ian: It's a tough decision!

Quiz

- 1. Cracking the whip is another term for using _____ to motivate people.**
 - a) kindness
 - b) rewards
 - c) punishment
 - d) authority

- 2. When people adopt the behaviour of other people without questioning why, this is called:**
 - a) not looking before you leap
 - b) a trend
 - c) herd mentality
 - d) being thoughtless

- 3. The simplest definition of the it factor is:**
 - a) nerve
 - b) charisma
 - c) temperament
 - d) talent

- 4. If something happened way back, it happened:**
 - a) yesterday
 - b) a little while ago
 - c) a long time ago
 - d) hundreds of years ago

- 5. What is another word for a popular new fashion?**
 - a) a trend
 - b) a kick
 - c) a drift
 - d) a lean

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.c 3.b 4.c 5.a

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